

VZCZCXRO9540
OO RUEHAST RUEHCHI RUEHDH RUEHDT RUEHHM RUEHLN RUEHMA RUEHNH RUEHPB
RUEHPOD RUEHTM RUEHTRO
DE RUEHBK #1435/01 1670717
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 160717Z JUN 09
FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7290
RUEHCHI/AMCONSUL CHIANG MAI 6672
RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE
RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 7502
RUEHSV/AMEMBASSY SUVA 0470
RUEAUSA/DEPT OF HHS WASHINGTON DC
RUEHPH/CDC ATLANTA GA
RUEHRC/USDA FAS WASHDC

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BANGKOK 001435

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE
DEPARTMENT FOR OES/IHB:JJONES,CPATTERSON; EAP FOR DHANNEMAN
DEPT FOR USAID/GBH
USDA FOR FAS AND APHIS
HHS FOR CDC
USCINCPACLO FOR AFRIMS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KFLU](#) [AEMR](#) [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [TBIO](#) [KSAF](#) [KPAO](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [AMGT](#)
MG, ECON, EAID, WHO, TH
SUBJECT: MGSF01: 150 Thai H1N1 cases; Interagency Coordination
Starting

BANGKOK 00001435 001.2 OF 002

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. SUMMARY. The Thai Ministry of Public Health and Ministry of Education held an interagency coordination meeting on June 9 to discuss preparedness plans for the outbreak of H1N1 within the country. A representative from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) who attended the meeting found the coordination encouraging, with information and recommendations current, accurate and reasonable. As of June 15, Thailand has confirmed 150 H1N1 cases; more are expected in the coming weeks as Thai students return from abroad. END SUMMARY.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION MEETING

¶2. (SBU) On June 9, officials from the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) and Ministry of Education met to discuss H1N1 preparedness plans. The 40 participants included senior public health and education officials, representatives from the private sector, at least 10 members of the Thai press, and a representative from the USG's Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The meeting was chaired by Dr. Paichit Warachit, the Deputy Permanent Secretary for Public Health. More meetings between the MoPH and the Ministry of Education are planned. The CDC participant found the Thai government's first real interagency coordination encouraging, with information and recommendations current, accurate and reasonable. Points made at the meeting include: Some H1N1 cases are to be expected among returning students; close coordination between the two Ministries was essential to limit and contain H1N1 transmission among students in Thai schools and universities; and that the Ministry of Education has final authority regarding school closures, acting on the guidance of the MoPH.

STUDENTS RETURNING FROM ABROAD

¶3. (U) According to information presented at the meeting, hundreds to possibly thousands of Thai student travelers, mostly college age, will be returning from language study, work study and general travel in North America during the next two to four weeks. The next semester at Thai Universities will be starting soon, with concern that returning students infected with H1N1 could start multiple outbreaks at their schools. The government will implement prevention and control efforts and will focus on students returning from work and travel in the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, and European Union countries. Information and awareness campaigns have been recommended, with emphasis on non-pharmaceutical interventions

such as frequent handwashing, respiratory etiquette, appropriate use of face masks, environmental measures, and regular exercise and health maintenance. AFS International Programs, a global student exchange organization, will postpone large gatherings of returning students. Travelers returning from overseas are being advised to stay home for 3 to 7 days, and to see a doctor if they experience flu-like symptoms. Dr. Passakorn Akkaraseewee of MoPH requested that the Ministry of Education assign points of contact at schools and universities to ensure effective coordination.

SYSTEM FOR ACCESSING OUTBREAK STATUS

14. (U) Thailand has also designed a system to indicate outbreak status throughout the country. Situation "A" means there are no cases; situation B means there are few cases, mostly from travelers returning to the country; and situation C means there is widespread outbreaks in schools and communities. Different geographic areas can have different "situations," depending on local conditions. Health officials hope for most of Thailand to stay in situation B, although Pattaya is in situation C due to a recent string of outbreaks.

CURRENT OUTBREAK STATUS OF H1N1

15. (U) As of June 12 Thailand has confirmed 150 cases of H1N1 and more are expected in the coming weeks. Two Taiwanese claimed to have been infected with H1N1 during their visit to Pattaya. MoPH officials confirmed 21 H1N1 cases in Pattaya. Five boys attending the same school in Bangkok have also been confirmed with H1N1; the school is now closed for one week to prevent further H1N1 while the school is cleaned. Chiang Mai has confirmed its first case of H1N1. Dr. Surasingha Wisarutrat, Medical Officer at the Chiang Mai Office of Public Health confirmed one case of H1N1 in a Chiang Mai University student who recently returned from summer work and travel in the U.S. The student is currently under quarantine at Chiang Mai University Hospital.

BANGKOK 00001435 002.2 OF 002

16. (U) The Pattaya and other cases were confirmed using the more accurate Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) test kit, which is in use by all government hospitals. Private hospitals are permitted to use either PCR or a 'quick test' which only tests for Influenza A and B, after which the MoPH uses PCR to confirm H1N1.

17. (SBU) Dr. Wisarutrat believes the MoPH is prepared to deal with the returning Summer Work and Travel (SWT) program students; MoPH made public announcements asking people with flu-like symptoms to stay home or see a doctor. MoPH is also recommending publicly that anyone traveling in public transportation wear a mask, wash hands frequently, and use hand sanitizer. The Chiang Mai Office of Public Health also has a telephone hotline for the public. (Note: the SWT program allows students on school break to hold temporary jobs in the U.S. while on J-1 NIVs; these are typically summer student jobs such as working at Disney World or fast food restaurants. The program is quite popular with Thai students. End Note.)

18. (SBU) COMMENT: The June 9 interagency meeting was a step in the right direction toward opening a productive and active line of communication between the Ministries of Public Health and Education. It will hopefully lead to more interagency cooperation especially with regard to worst-case scenario planning for a widespread pandemic in Thailand that will need to involve police and other agencies. END COMMENT.

19. (U) POC is ESTH officer Hal Howard, howardhh@state.gov.

GRIFFITHS